

Perhaps the most scintillating and controversial debate of Tuesday came on H.R. 299, “Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the Nation during Public Service Recognition Week, May 4 through 10, 2009, and throughout the year.”

After all the heavy legislative lifting of the day, what better way for public servants to top it off than by passing a bill commending themselves for their efforts? For the record, the public service bill passed 419-0, with Republicans Marsha Blackburn (Tenn.), **John Campbell (Calif.)**

, Mike Conaway (Texas), and Randy Neugebauer (Texas) all registering protest votes of “present.”

The following morning, Blackburn took to the House floor and blasted the Democratic leaders for negotiating the details of the controversial cap-and-trade (“cap-and-tax,” to Blackburn) bill behind closed doors while Congress debated “such staggeringly important work as supporting the goals of Public Service Recognition Week and National Train Day.”

“If our environment were in serious peril that could be effectively addressed by the cap-and-tax system, one would think we would be burning our carbon credits debating that bill, not on the suspensions we have passed,” Blackburn said.

Communications director Claude Chafin told me Blackburn voted “present” because she thought the bill was silly and self-congratulatory and “didn’t want to throw out her elbow patting herself on the back.”